

GEORGIA

August 2021

Census data determines the allocation of federal and other funds to vital social programs, guides redistricting, and informs research. Therefore, an accurate census that captures historically undercounted populations¹ is crucial for our democracy. Since 2016, a collaborative of philanthropic funders has worked to align and pool funding to build and strengthen the infrastructure needed to support a fair and accurate count.

The Democracy Funders Collaborative's Census Subgroup, which is the steering committee for the census funder collaborative, engaged ORS Impact as a partner to develop state-level reports that provide an overview of philanthropic efforts to promote the 2020 Census within and across the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. This report provides a summary of census efforts for the State of Georgia based on review of secondary data, and interviews with key actors involved (n=6).

¹We have opted to use the term "historically undercounted populations" in our narrative, but the term is interchangeable with "hard to count," which we use when our informants opted to do so



OVERVIEW GOING INTO 2020 CENSUS

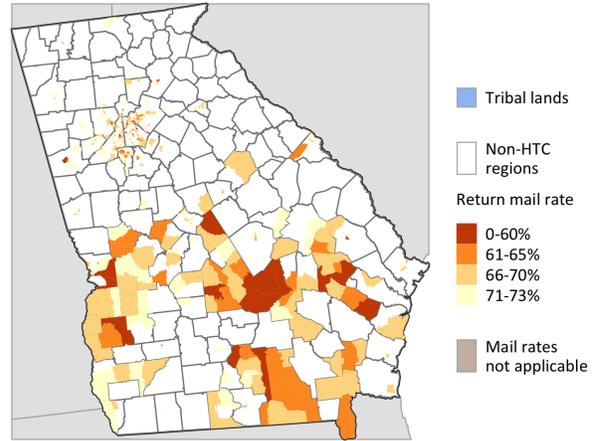
10,297,484

TOTAL POPULATION

2,270,806

TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED CENSUS TRACTS

HISTORICALLY UNDERCOUNTED TRACTS BY COUNTY



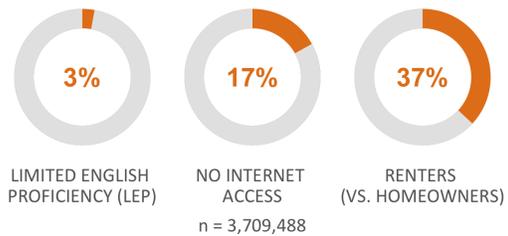
Special update/enumerate method used for counting as mail return rates are not applicable

Population

Past analyses of Census data have consistently shown differences in self-response rates based on household or individual characteristics, indicating that certain populations are at higher risk of being undercounted. The following graphs show the distribution of selected populations within the state that have historically been more likely to be undercounted. Data for all maps and graphs provided by CUNY Graduate Center via the Census 2020 Hard to Count/Response Rate map at www.CensusHardToCountMaps2020.us.

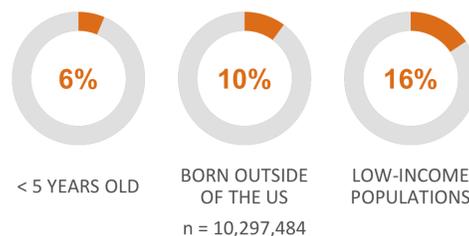
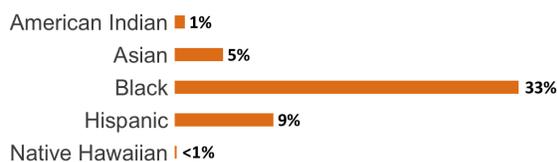
HOUSEHOLDS

Percent of total number of households in the state that have the following characteristics:



INDIVIDUALS

Percent of total number of individuals in the state that have characteristics of historically undercounted populations:

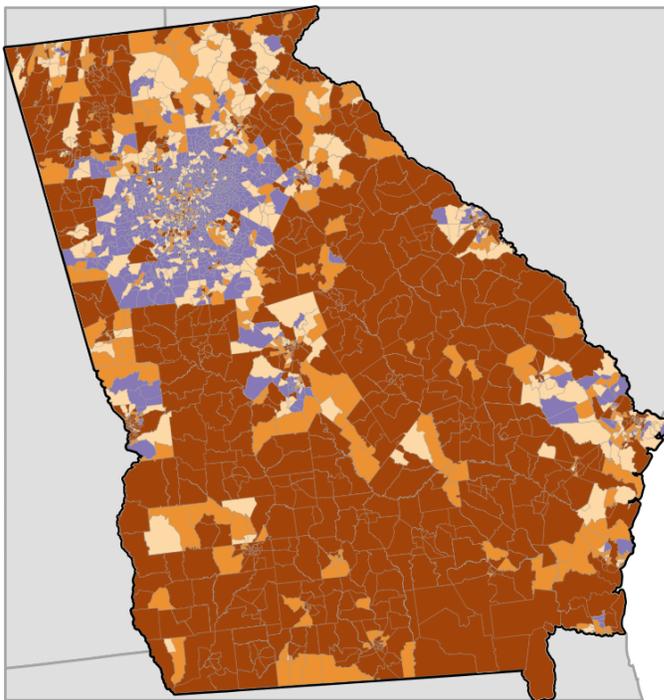




OVERVIEW OF CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

| YEAR | SELF RESPONSE | CHANGE |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| 2020 | 62.9% | +0.4 |
| 2010 | 62.5% | |

CENSUS TRACTS WHERE 2020 CENSUS RETURN RATE WAS LOWER THAN 2010



- No comparable 2010 rate
- 2020 rate < 2010 rate by 10+ points
- 5-10 points below
- Up to 5 points below
- 2020 rate at or above 2010

STRUCTURE OF CENSUS OUTREACH

Multiple nonprofit, philanthropic, and government actors worked to promote the 2020 Census in Georgia. The earliest efforts in the state began in 2017, when nonprofits engaged in advocacy efforts to encourage local government participation in the “Local Update of Census Addresses” process. In 2018 and 2019, groups shifted their attention to focus on preparing for the census count itself. Recognizing the importance of engaging with historically undercounted groups to encourage census participation, a coalition of nonprofits representing diverse groups from across the state came together to organize a collective census response. ProGeorgia, Georgia’s nonprofit civic engagement table, and partners including the Georgia Coalition for People’s Agenda, Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials, Latino Community Fund (LCF Georgia), Women Watch Afrika, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta, were heavily involved in organizing and mobilizing nonprofits within the state.

Fair Count led another major nonprofit census effort within the state. Established in 2018 with the sole purpose of an accurate and fair count for the 2020 Census in Georgia, Fair Count sought to engage historically undercounted communities using the same campaign strategy that had proven effective during Stacey Abrams’ gubernatorial campaign. Although the campaign was statewide, Fair Count’s efforts were mostly concentrated in the central and southern regions of the state.

Both local and national philanthropic funders were active in supporting the census effort in the state. For example, at the regional level, The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta was involved as grant maker for regional outreach efforts focused on groups undercounted in the 2010 Census. The foundation also served as a connector/convener, an advocate, and a member of the City of Atlanta Complete Count Committee. National funders, such as the National Census Equity Fund, also provided vital financial support to efforts in the state.

The state government and local complete count committees were also active in promoting the census within the state. The State Complete Count Committee conducted a public awareness campaign to promote the census. Local complete count committees, particularly in major metropolitan areas, were also active in promoting the count. Complete count committees were also formed by nonprofit organizations to address hard-to-count populations, including Georgia Latino CCC, Asian American Pacific Islander CCC, and Black Men Count.

Table 1: Key actors involved in Census Efforts²:

| Actor | Role |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| ProGeorgia | Led nonprofit efforts within the state. Main partners included Georgia Coalition for People’s Agenda, Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials, Latino Community Fund, Women Watch Afrika, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta |
| Fair Count Georgia | Led a separate nonprofit census outreach effort, providing funding, technology, on-the-ground organizers, and strategy to reach historically undercounted individuals |
| State Complete Count Committee | The Georgia State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020 budget (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020), included \$1.5 million for targeted marketing for hard-to-count communities. The funding was used for a media campaign, a small portion of which went to Voices for Georgia’s Children to reach undercounted communities. The SFY2020 state budget also included \$2.6 million in bonds to public libraries to boost technology for census completion. |

FUNDING FOR CENSUS OUTREACH

Overall, an estimated \$6.8 million of philanthropic and state funding supported census efforts in Georgia.

Table 2: Funding for 2020 Census Outreach³

| Funding Source and Amount | Funding Purpose |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Philanthropy: \$ 3,009,000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of this total, The national Census Equity Fund provided grants totaling \$835,000 to organizations across the state. Other funders contributed an estimated \$2,174,000. • The majority of funds were used to support mini-grants to local organizations to engage with historically undercounted populations. |

²Data reflects the Census Bureau’s last update of self-response data (published in January 2021), which differs from the CUNY maps that use data from October 2020

³Funding data should be taken as estimates. We included data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and Census Equity Fund (CEF) grants where applicable; other figures are estimates provided by key informants

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>State Government: \$3,750,886</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Georgia SFY2020 budget (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020) included \$1.5 million for targeted marketing to hard-to-count communities. The funding was used for a media campaign, a small portion of which went to Voices for Georgia’s Children to reach undercounted communities. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports a total of \$3.75 million. |
| <p>In-Kind Contributions: Unknown</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple organizations involved in the Complete Count Committee provided in-kind contributions of staff labor and time. |

DESCRIPTION OF 2020 CENSUS OUTREACH

Mini-grant programs were critical to efforts in the state. Both the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and the organizations involved in the civic engagement table provided grants to organizations to conduct regional outreach to historically undercounted populations using a “trusted messenger” model. The foundation was focused on 23 counties within the greater Atlanta region. Based on undercounted populations in the 2010 Census, they targeted African American men, immigrants, Asian Americans, and low-income families with children under the age of 5. The foundation also worked with libraries, African American led/serving groups, groups that served immigrants and refugees, youth organizers, advocates for individuals with other abilities, LGBTQ groups, and childcare centers, as well as Latinx and Asian-American populations.

The organizations that the foundation worked with included Black Voters Matter, Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Refugee Women’s Network, The Arc Georgia, LCF Georgia, Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda, Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials, Women Watch Afrika, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta, Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Direction and Unified Policies, and many more. These groups had a range of funding but were the trusted voices in those communities. Some of the groups were state-based, while some were more local.

Groups used many tactics to engage with historically undercounted groups. Groups used a variety of tactics to reach the undercounted populations. For example, phone contact and text messaging were commonly used and effective strategies. Groups also used pledge cards to allow people to commit to completing the census. Another strategy was using recordings on the public transportation system to provide directions to the nearest library to complete the census. Groups also used podcasts to reach the Asian American community. In addition, some groups trained childcare providers, parents, and caregivers to be ambassadors to share information about the census with their families.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, groups also used in-person engagement methods, but these tactics largely shifted to alternative strategies in response to the pandemic. Some groups did in-person canvassing and door-knocking campaigns in support of the census. When the pandemic made in-person engagement

impossible, these groups shifted to focus on social media engagement or other strategies, such as creating music videos. ProGeorgia created the Georgia Counts website as an online venue for libraries and community centers to access census information in different languages. The funders did not dictate any specific strategy but simply supported the efforts by different groups and trusted that they knew their constituents. One successful tactic used by some of the partners, including Fair Count, was to “patch through calls,” whereby they would connect interested individuals directly to the Census Bureau to complete the census. Voices for Georgia’s Children produced an informational flyer, printed by Fair Count, that was packed by Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students volunteers into school lunches to be sent home to Atlanta Public Schools families receiving meal assistance. Fair Count also provided personal protective equipment resources containing census information to meat-packing plants.

Fair Count used a community organizing strategy that had proven effective in previous political campaigns.

Fair Count had a field team of organizers on the ground starting in May 2019. Relying on relationships and partnership with different trusted organizations in undercounted communities, they provided internet access in 160 locations where community members were comfortable going, along with iPads and Chromebooks. Fair Count also had an in-person bus tour that travelled around the state to promote the 2020 Census. After the Covid-19 pandemic started, this became a virtual tour providing internet hotspots in rural communities without internet access.

Public and private efforts relied on data from the previous census to target resources to historically undercounted areas. These efforts used 2010 Census data to identify low-response-rate communities, which were predominantly African American, Latinx, and Native American.

Education and messages developed before outreach got underway enhanced the effectiveness of efforts.

For example, ProGeorgia began by educating their members in 2018 and supported six coordinators in their member organizations to develop census outreach plans. They also leveraged voter registration data to identify communities with high rates of undercounted populations. To support efforts on the ground, they developed census outreach talking points and materials to be distributed to communities. The US Census Bureau was also involved in providing data and support to the 2020 Census Get Out the Count efforts.

The business sector was difficult to engage. Only a handful of minority chambers of commerce participated in census efforts in the state. It was challenging to get the business sector onboard because the 2020 Census had become highly politicized.

Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, the state faced other challenges that disrupted 2020 Census efforts. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia faced social justice demonstrations and several natural disasters that impacted the 2020 Get Out the Count.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Greater partnership with the state, as well as increased funding from the state earlier in the process, could enhance future census outreach efforts.** Improved partnership between the state government and the nonprofit sector could enhance future efforts. Similarly, additional state funding is needed to ensure an accurate count.
- **Funders felt that pulling their funds together was successful.** Although there is a Georgia Grantmakers Alliance, several Georgia funder members worked together to align 2020 Census grantmaking. This experience could be leveraged to start a civic engagement table in the future.
- **Greater philanthropic involvement is needed to support ongoing civic engagement efforts, not just during the census but on an ongoing basis.** Increased funding is needed leading up to the census as it takes time to mobilize groups to undertake effective outreach. Beginning as early as 2025, outreach and education could be targeted toward funders who didn't fund 2020 Census grants. Such individuals and organizations could be encouraged to participate in a civic engagement funder table to start aligned/pooled efforts.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the aftermath of the 2020 Census, the nonprofit civic engagement table continues building relationships with different partners—some of which are working on redistricting efforts—to collaborate on future issues. Funders also seek to expand collaboration and support for nonprofits engaged in nonpartisan and nonpolitical civic participation, such as voter education, registration, and outreach; voting rights; redistricting; civic education; civic journalism; and more.



DATA SOURCES

Representatives from the following organizations participated in interviews and/or contributed information for this report:

- Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
- Sapelo Foundation
- ProGeorgia
- Fair Count
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
- LCF Georgia